

# GS-0401-5/7/9-Agriculture Specialist – Fact Sheet

**Do you want to put your scientific education to use protecting America's environment, economy, and food supply by preventing the introduction of plant viruses, diseases, and bio-threats?** You would also have the authority to seize prohibited or contaminated items, which could cause great harm. As an Agriculture Specialist with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, you would be trained to make a difference in both the daily lives and the future of the American people and would play a critical role in the Department of Homeland Security. You would be trained to serve as an expert and technical consultant in the areas of inspection, intelligence, analysis, examination and law enforcement activities related to the importation of agricultural/commercial commodities and conveyances at the various ports of entry. The mission is critical and the duties varied. You would apply a wide range of federal, state and local laws and agency regulations when determining the admissibility of agriculture commodities while preventing the introduction of harmful pests, diseases and potential agro-terrorism into the United States. Therefore, you could be participating in special enforcement, targeting or analysis teams charged with collecting and analyzing information and identifying high-risk targets; or you could be conducting visual and physical inspections of cargo, conveyances or passenger baggage. You could also plan, conduct and supervise remedial actions such as treating, disinfecting and decontaminating prohibited commodities, conveyances, contaminants or agricultural materials.

## Benefits and Salary

CBP offers a generous benefits package including personal leave days for vacation, illness and family care, a wide choice of health insurance programs, life insurance, long-term care insurance, flexible spending accounts for out-of-pocket medical or dependent care expenses, a fully portable retirement program that includes a Thrift Savings Plan (similar to a 401k) and a uniform allowance. In addition, some locations have access to fitness facilities, related health and wellness programs and on-site childcare facilities.

These are full-time permanent positions. Initial appointments are made at the GS-5/7/9 grade levels with non-competitive promotion potential to the GS-12 without needing to reapply. There is also the opportunity to earn overtime pay. For current salary information please refer to the Office of Personnel Management's website at <http://www.opm.gov/oca>.

## Locations

These positions are located at CBP ports of entry including land borders, airports, seaports and preclearance stations. Incumbents may be rotated between assignments and duty locations. Applicants may choose one of 12 hiring regions and must be willing to accept any location within that region.

## Pre-employment Requirements

A thorough background investigation, drug test and medical examination are required. If your background includes past or present arrests, convictions, dismissals from previous jobs, debts and financial issues, excessive use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs and/or the sale and distribution of illegal drugs, you most probably will be rated unsuitable for this position.

## Training

New hires must successfully complete ten to twelve weeks of paid training at the Professional Development Center located in Frederick, MD.

## Job Requirements

Agriculture Specialists must wear a uniform; work overtime and/or shift work (sometimes under arduous conditions); and be subject to random drug testing.

## Qualifications

**Must be a U.S. citizen** to apply and must possess a valid state driver's license at the time of appointment.

**All applicants must have** a bachelor's or higher degree with a major field of study in biological sciences (including botany, entomology and plant pathology), agriculture, natural resource management, chemistry or a field directly related to the position. A combination of experience and education that includes twenty-four semester hours in the disciplines listed above and job experience in areas such as pest control, pesticide application, inspecting aircraft or passengers, x-ray or environmental monitoring, or farm management related to disease control, insect

detection/eradication or pest control may also be qualifying. These are the basic requirements for the position and qualifies you for the GS-5 grade level.

To qualify for a GS-7 level position, you must meet the basic entry qualification requirements for the GS-5 plus have Superior Academic Achievement (SAA), or one year of graduate level education in a field of study directly related to the position, or one full year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-5 level. Examples of qualifying experience include inspecting vessels, vehicles, aircraft and baggage for the presence of restricted plant material, pests or diseases; and reviewing/analyzing passenger and/or commodity documents to assess the agricultural risk of their entry into the United States.

To qualify for a GS-9 level position, you must meet the basic qualification requirements and have one year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-7 level, as described above, or a master's degree or two years of graduate education in a field of study directly related to the position.

Please refer to the vacancy announcement for more specifics on qualifying experience and education.

## Appearance Standards

In general as a uniformed CBP officer or agriculture specialist, you will be required to adhere to the Agency's uniform and appearance standards. The distinctive CBP uniform is so closely related to the mission and traditions of the agency that it is virtually synonymous with both the agency's purpose and personnel. Uniformed employees are held in high esteem by the public as guardians of the Nation's borders. Extremes and fads in appearance and attire are prohibited in order to maintain the highest standards of professionalism, propriety, decorum, good taste, and to project an image that encourages and facilitates public interaction with uniformed CBP personnel. Certain aspects of the OFO personal appearance standard draw distinctions between standards for male and female officers. This does not reflect any difference in the degree to which it is imperative that female or male employees are well groomed; rather it reflects norms and expectations by the public of grooming standards by the two sexes. These expectations and norms are critical to the recognition, cooperation and approachability by the public.

## Steps in the Hiring Process

If you are interested in applying and want to receive notification when the announcement is open, go to [www.USAJOBS.opm.gov](http://www.USAJOBS.opm.gov), click on MY ACCOUNT at the top of the webpage, click on [create a new account](#) if you do not already have one. Create an account and then follow the instructions pertaining to automated job alerts and register for the GS-0401, CBP Agriculture Specialist position.

**Application Process.** Applications are only accepted during the open period defined in each individual announcement. You must submit your application and all supporting documentation online or by fax. We DO NOT accept documentation sent via U.S. Mail or e-mail. Please carefully follow the instructions under "how to apply" in the vacancy announcement found on [www.USAJOBS.opm.gov](http://www.USAJOBS.opm.gov) to ensure a completed application package.

**Selection process.** Once you apply, your application will be rated based on your education and/or experience and assigned a category rating. If applicable, veterans' preference credit will be applied within each category. Your name may be placed on a list based on an evaluation of your education and experience. Managers will use this list when making conditional selections. This position is inventory based and selection may be made for 6 months or more using the same application. Your professional qualifications and/or educational references may be checked prior to any selection decisions. If selected, conditional offers of employment will then be issued with a final offer contingent upon successful completion of the pre-employment requirements.

**Pre-employment.** You must successfully complete a background investigation, drug test and medical examination. CBP will schedule and pay for the required drug and medical testing.

**Final selection and reporting date!** If you successfully complete these steps, your name will be placed in the pipeline for future funded vacancies. As vacancies occur, applicants in the pipeline will be given firm employment offers within the geographic region they were tentatively selected for.